



TEXAS INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION

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TIDC Awards Grants To Fund Regional Public Defender Program In South Texas And To Support Defense In Capital Cases In Urban Counties

TIDC Announces Publication Of Attorney Mentoring Program Publication

AUSTIN, Texas - The [Texas Indigent Defense Commission](#) (TIDC) awarded a discretionary grant up to \$681,120 to support a new public defender program for Starr, Duval, and Jim Hogg Counties. The program, which will provide representation for most indigent defendants in felony, misdemeanor, juvenile, and appeals cases, will be operated by Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (TRLA) and builds upon the success of their public defender programs in four other counties in south Texas. "Our counties have high poverty rates and a very limited tax base, so we have struggled to meet indigent defense needs," said Duval County Judge Ricardo Carrillo. "This support is essential and will allow us to meet our constitutional obligations through TRLA's program, which has a track record of success." "Starr County currently spends approximately \$400,000 on indigent defense," said Starr County Judge Eloy Vera. "With the current situation along the border this number will definitely increase. Without this grant, we would not be able to give proper defense to our indigent." The grant was made from a new allocation of General Revenue provided to the Commission by the Texas Legislature for the FY16/17 budget.

The Commission also announced a new \$1.1 million supplemental formula grant program for Texas's largest counties that are not eligible to participate in the rural Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases (RPDO). The RPDO is supported with TIDC grant funds and helps smaller counties with indigent defense needs in death penalty cases. The new funding announced today will provide additional support to the thirteen counties not eligible to participate in that program. "With this program we are now offering support for capital case defense to all 254 counties in Texas," said Commission Chair Sharon Keller. These supplemental formula grants utilize new general revenue allocated this year by the Texas Legislature.

The Commission also announced the publication of [Indigent Defense Attorney Mentoring in Texas: A Guide to Establishing a Mentoring Program](#). The comprehensive guide along with other resource materials was made possible by a grant from the Texas Governor's Criminal Justice Division. The TIDC contracted with experts at the National Legal Aid and Defender Association to develop a guide that is adaptable to different sized jurisdictions. The report and additional resource materials are designed to create effective mentoring programs for criminal defense attorneys across the state. "Mentoring is especially critical for criminal

defense lawyers charged with protecting the rights of those who stand accused of crimes and whose liberty is stake,” said Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht. "Experienced lawyers can share both knowledge and wisdom with new lawyers, assuring that justice will be well served in criminal cases." Criminal defense attorneys in Texas typically practice on their own and do not have the natural opportunity for mentoring that exists in prosecutors' offices or public defenders offices.

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